The universal Character of departed Saints.

A

SERMON

Occasioned by the

DEATH

OF

Mrs. REBEKAH COX,

Who departed this Life, *September* 19, 1769.

In the 74th YEAR of her AGE;

And of others lately deceased.

BY BENJAMIN WALLIN.

Let me die the death of the Righteous, and let my last end be like his. Num. xxiii. 10.

LONDON:

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TO THE

CHURCH of CHRIST,

MEETING

Near the Mazes-Pond, Southwark;

AND

All those who attend their ASSEMBLIES.

Dearly Beloved,

AFTER near thirty years labour among you, in this mortal state, it is no wonder that few remain, who called me to the pastoral office; but it is my honour and joy, that the generality of those who are departed, so evidently limited their character in death,

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death. O that we, who are soon to follow, may obtain mercy to die in like manner!

Nothing can be more obvious, than the propriety and usefulness of remembering those who have adorned their profession, and, in their latest moments, being strong in faith, gave glory to God. The passage improved in the ensuing pages, shews, that the faithful in life, are to keep in view the manner in which the saints gone before them, have died; therefore a just memorial of those who have been eminent in their place, is not only decent, but one considerable means of animating believers in their course towards heaven, in which, dying daily, the subject is in an habitual readiness for compleating his warfare, in the name

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of the Lord; may this end be anſwered by a compliance with the requeſt of many, for *printing* a diſcourſe, for I can ſcarce ſay it is *publiſhed*, which, however plain, was ſeaſonable for us; and if it ſhould prove uſeful to any others, they will require no apology for the liberty I have taken.

Some may think it extraordinary, that in ſo little time, no leſs than three ſermons ſhould appear, the occaſion of which is from the ſame family, but the reader will perceive, that this laſt is not confined to that houſe; and beſides, this family being now entirely abſent, there is a fair opportunity of freely repreſenting their pious example, without the inconvenience, not to ſay danger, that might otherwiſe ariſe, with reſpect to ſurviving

relations

relations, I therefore moſt chearfully embrace it, and hope your prayers will attend this endeavour, in which I cannot join, without a thankful acknowledgement of the divine bleſſing, under which the firſt of theſe pieces has graciouſly ſucceeded, to the advantage of many.

I have nothing to add, the ſubſtance of which may not be found in the dedication of my chriſtian life, twenty three years ago; which many of you can peruſe; and I hope, that amidſt all my imperfection and unworthineſs, I have been enabled, ſince that date, at leaſt in a charitable view, to anſwer the character of one, who naturally cares for your eſtate; a character which, as in the

the ſight of God, I earneſtly deſire to maintain to the end of my life.

It may be deemed affected and ſingular, if I ſhould on the preſent occaſion diſcover my heart, or preſume to ſay with the apoſtle; God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jeſus. A faithful miniſter muſt find pleaſure in telling his people how dear they are to him, and how willing he is to impart his own ſoul with the goſpel unto them; but time and circumſtances forbid me this indulgence; I therefore conclude with ardent ſupplication to the God of all grace, that late changes by death, or otherwiſe, may be ſanctified; that you may be touched with a mutual feeling for Chriſt and each other; and that

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the additions with which we have been favoured in the midst of our losses, may soon be followed with many more of such as shall be saved in the day of the Lord, and still remain,

My dear friends,

Your willing servant in the gospel,

BENJAMIN WALLIN.

Porter's-Buildings, Southwark,
October 16, 1769.

Heb. xi. 13.

These all died in faith.

FEW present need be told, that of late, many ancient and honourable members of this church, have been removed by death. So quick are the returns of these strokes, that ere the sound of my discourse, on the decease of a venerable officer is passed away, we are called to improve the departure of his valuable relict; a mother in Israel; no less justly esteemed in her place, which she maintained with reputation, a like number of years with the late dear partner of her life. I have selected this sentence for our improvement and comfort under these repeated deprivations, not without an eye to all the deceased referred to above, but more especially to that dear family now extinct from us.

Our text is a reflection on some remarkable saints, who were eminent for their piety from the beginning. The subject in contemplation

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is their departure, or how they died; that, conſidering their happy and noble exit, we may be inſpired to follow their example, and in like manner overcome, and attain to the inheritance of that kingdom, in which they now triumph at the throne of God and the Lamb. This is the report; their character is the fame; though they lived in ages far diſtant, and their ſtation and circumſtances in the world and in the church very different; though the number of their days on earth, but few indeed at moſt, yet ſome were greater than others; and in a word, however various their trials in life, or ſorrows at death, in this they unite; *Theſe all died in faith.*

Theſe; i. e. theſe eminent patriarchs and prophets, famed in the hiſtory of the church, as faithful ſervants of God; *theſe*, who made a noble ſtand for the truth in their day, who pleaſed the Lord and bore a teſtimony for him in the midſt of the infidelity and licentiouſneſs of their age; and in a word, *theſe* who were enabled through grace to behave with ſuch magnanimity in obedience to the will of God, through much tribulation.

Theſe all died. It is no juſt objection, that one of theſe worthies, viz. *Enoch*, did not

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ſee death; his faith is ſpoken of among others who glorified God in their day; and we may with reaſon conclude, that it was exerted in his tranſlation; but it would ſavour of prejudice to ſuppoſe that the inſpired hiſtorian contradicted himſelf, and he is too expreſs, in relating the exception, to be miſtaken. This very term *All*, is ſo far from being eſſentially univerſal, as the advocates for that unſcriptural notion of univerſal redemption inſinuate, that it is ſcarce ever uſed without limitation. Theſe *all*; i. e. in general, yea every one, except in the inſtance particularly mentioned, *died*. What then? Is there any thing ſingular or extraordinary in the deceaſe of theſe ſaints? Indeed it deſerves our notice, that the righteous die, as may hereafter appear. But is not death the common lot of mankind? How then are theſe illuſtrious perſons diſtinguiſhed from others? Some were nobly deſcended, at leaſt their families, were ancient and honourable; for the patriarchs were men of renown; they were alſo ſome of them, like *Abraham*, rich, and not a few lived many ſcores or hundred years; but they are diſtinguiſhed in the text, not by their family after the fleſh, their connection with this or the other great man; it is not the

titles they bore, the high places they held, the eſtates they were poſſeſſed of, or their age in this life, or in ſhort, any thing natural or temporal that belonged to their character in the world. Theſe things are not to be overlooked or deſpiſed, at leaſt on ſome occaſions, it is pertinent and uſeful, to mention them in an account of the deceaſed; and far be it to imagine that religion and the favour of God is confined from them who are exalted in providence; though not *many* wiſe men after the fleſh, or mighty, or noble are called, *ſome* ſuch are numbered with the children of God; at the ſame time we are to remember, that a man's birth and character in life, for riches, honour, and natural wiſdom, or policy, may be highly reſpectable and deſerving our notice, and yet the poor deceaſed wretch, being ungodly, when buried, or rather at the inſtant of his departure, like the rich man in the parable, lift up his eyes in hell-torments*! Unhappy the man, on whom the largeſt encomiums of a natural or civil kind, however juſtly given; though his report ſhould fill up a column or page in the moſt popular paper of intelligence, to whoſe charac-

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* Luke xvi. 23.

ter nothing more can be added, or indeed of whom any thing leſs than this can be ſaid, namely, that *he died in faith*. This is the report of theſe excellent perſons who are celebrated in the context.

Now, to die in faith, is not peculiar to *Abel Noah* and *Abraham*, or to perſons of the moſt exalted character among the faithful; it is a manner of dying which belongs to thoſe, who, being called by grace, believe to the ſaving of the ſoul. Theſe great men are introduced as a pattern of all the ſpiritual ſeed, who, like *Abraham* their father, ſojourn in the body, while on earth, looking for a city which hath foundations; and accordingly, their character, in the paſſage before us, is not taken from any particular act of obedience in life, in reſpect of which the faithful themſelves differ greatly; each one hath his trial, and will evidence his faith by his works, but ſome do one thing and ſome another, as called and enabled by providence and grace, which appears from the account of the very perſons referred to; the ſubject we are upon is not what theſe ſervants of the Lord *did* or *ſuffered* in life, but the *ſtate* or *manner* in which they died, and though even here, as we

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ſhall ſee, there may be a difference in reſpect of the degree, or manifeſtation of faith in their latter end; yet, as obſerved, the report of theſe worthies is one and the ſame, neither more nor leſs than this, is affirmed of the whole, and each individual: Theſe all, and every one, *died in faith.*

In the light of this ſacred declaration we perceive the following truths, in briefly diſcourſing on which I ſhall attempt to improve the preſent opportunity. And,

Firſt, It appears that the faithful die as the reſt of mankind. This indeed is a common obſervation, yet not impertinent or uſeleſs, a practical ſenſe of the truth is of peculiar ſervice in a life of faith; now this is implied in the declaration before us; the exception of *Enoch*, as already hinted, and if to that we ſubjoin the caſe of *Elijah*, ſhakes not the foundation of this propoſition; it is "appointed unto all men once to die;" there is "no diſcharge in this war." *Eccleſ.* ix. 8. No man is excuſed on any account; no, not his being choſen of God, or redeemed by the blood of his Son and partaker of his Spirit, will free him from this obligation. All ages ſhew that no character, however dignified or

peculiar

peculiar in civil or religious life, ſecures the ſubject from death; it is no wonder that *Adam* the firſt born of man, and a very great perſonage, ſhould die, ſeeing ſin, and thence death, came into the world by his diſobedience; but *Abel*, that early and eminent inſtance of piety and righteouſneſs, who was ſo acceptable to God in his perſon and ſervice is dead: Alſo *Noah*, who was no leſs righteous in the ſight of the Lord, and who alone was found perfect when the antideluvian world, it may be, then more populous than it has been ever ſince, was deſtroyed for its wickedneſs; I ſay, *Noah* himſelf, that worker and preacher of righteouſneſs, who ſtood the ſcoff of an abandoned generation, when the whole earth was corrupt before God, was not ſpared; indeed he and his family were preſerved from the general deſtruction by the flood, yet afterwards the ſwellings of *Jordan* ſwept him away. Time would fail to tell of *Abraham*, *Moſes*, *Samuel*, *David*, and the prophets, with the apoſtles, and a multitude of confeſſors, who bore a noble teſtimony for the truth in their day, in a private or public capacity, ſince the aſcenſion of Jeſus, who are likewiſe all dead; they lived not for ever, but

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their ſepulchres are with us. The hope of *Iſrael* and the goſpel, is not an eſcape from natural death, but a deliverance by it, of the ſoul into the preſence of God, and at the appointed hour, a redemption from the grave in a glorious reſurrection. But,

Secondly, This declaration concerning the ſaints now deceaſed, imports, that the faith of God's children is ſubſtantially the ſame. *Theſe all died in faith*; *i. e.* in one and the ſame faith: There is no eſſential difference in the faith of God's elect, in point of doctrine or experience; as to doctrine, in every age, our own not excepted, the notions of men are divers, by which the unſkilful are carried about and deceived; yet there is but *one faith*, *Eph.* iv. 5. The faith once delivered to the ſaints, *Jude* iii. the ſame for ſubſtance ſince the world began; even as the truth is in Jeſus, *Eph.* iv. 21. "This is the "true grace of God wherein we ſtand," 1 *Pet.* v. 12. But our text no doubt refers to the grace or principle of faith, that gift of God, in them that are called; even that faith, in virtue of which the ſubject mixes or unites itſelf with the word, unto ſaving advantage, for want of which many have heard the goſpel

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in vain, *Heb.* iv. 2. Now there is a difference among them that fear God, in reſpect of their faith; ſome are ſtrong and others comparatively weak, and alſo their trials for the diſplay of this grace, and particularly in their lateſt moments, very much differ, nevertheleſs it is the ſelf-ſame principle that poſſeſſes them all; the author, the object, the influence, and the end of their faith is the ſame: It is the fruit of the Spirit, Jeſus is the author and finiſher thereof, in whom centre all the hopes of his people; and as it is of the operation of God, it works by love, purifies the heart, and yields much fruit in the life; and in a word, the end of this faith is the ſalvation of the ſoul, 1 *Pet.* i. 9. Hence we read, 2 *Pet.* ii. 1. of obtaining *like-precious* faith: this grace is therefore eſſentially the ſame in all who believe. Again,

Thirdly, We may obſerve that the genuine faith of God's people is abiding; it runs parallel with life, and continues through the valley of the ſhadow of death. It is the crowning article in the account of theſe worthies, that their faith endured the conflicts of a dying hour, and perſevered to the

end. That faith which is *of the Spirit* in the hearts of his choſen, muſt needs abide there, for who ſhall deſtroy the work of God in the ſoul? The believer may ſtagger through weakneſs; his carnal reaſon, and the ſuggeſtions of ſatan, may poſſeſs him with fears that are unworthy and groundleſs, but his faith ſhall not fail; and accordingly this grace in the ſaints is ſaid to be more precious than gold that *periſheth*, 1 *Pet.* i. 7. Gold of all earthly things is eſteemed as moſt ſolid and durable; yet even gold may be waſted and loſt, but if by any means, at any time, true faith might be loſt, the antitheſis would not be juſt; this grace could not with any propriety be preferred on a compariſon with gold that *periſheth*, if it *could be deſtroyed*; it will therefore abide in the ſubject during the preſent ſtate of exiſtence, and not fail till he has attained that viſion in which it is accompliſhed. And this perſeverance of the ſaints the apoſtle no doubt had in view, as appears from chap. x. 39. where he ſays, "But we "are not of them who draw back unto per-"dition, but of them that believe to the "ſaving of the ſoul." But what I would more particularly inſiſt on is this:

Fourthly,

Fourthly, It is the diſtinguiſhing and univerſal character of the righteous, that they die in faith. This is a criterion of a real chriſtian, and the plain and immediate doctrine of the text; if the illuſtrious perſons referred to, are the juſt pattern to them that believe, they all depart in faith. A dying hour is a ſeaſon for the ſpecial manifeſtation of this divine grace, which belongs to the children of God; through this the laſt enemy is vanquiſhed, and the believer's warfare is accompliſhed; nor can it with reaſon be doubted, that he who is born of God ſhall overcome; whatever his ſorrows or fears may be, we have ſeen, that his faith will hold out, and his hope ſhall not periſh: And truly there is ſomething noble and triumphant in holding faſt our confidence, and the rejoycing of our hope, in the wreck of nature, and when toſſed up and down with the waves and billows of death.

To our further improvement on the ſubject, I ſhall briefly conſider, what is implied in this exit of the righteous, or eſſential to dying in faith, the objects a believer is converſant with in this hour of trial, whereby he is ſuſtained and victorious, and the

articles confirmed, by the manifeſtation of his faith, on the approach of this ſolemn change, And,

Firſt, This manner of dying, ſuppoſes the ſubject in a ſtate of grace; no man can die in faith who is not poſſeſſed of that divine principle; it is ſufficient to mention ſo obvious a truth. To die in faith is to die in the Lord, or united to Chriſt, and accordingly in 1 *Theſſ.* iv. 16. we read of the *dead in Chriſt*, who ſhall riſe firſt, when he ſhall deſcend from heaven in the laſt and great day. Again,

2. They die in faith, who having obtained mercy to believe in the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, are baptized in his name, and hold faſt their profeſſion to the end. True it is, that an unbeliever may live and die under this form of religion, and on the other hand a real convert, through various temptations may be diſcouraged, and reſt ſhort of a conformity to the order of Chriſt; but all theſe referred to in the text were in this ſenſe confeſſors; they declared themſelves pilgrims and ſtrangers on earth, and bore an open teſtimony to the truth according to the diſpenſation they were under; in like manner a publick confeſſion of

Jeſus,

Jeſus, with ſelf-denial, and a patient continuance in his will, is eſſential to the character of a viſible chriſtian, or at leaſt to compleat it: and permit me to add, that to ſuch only the general promiſe of ſalvation is given: This is the tenor of the goſpel-report: "He that believeth and is * *baptized* ſhall "be ſaved." But,

3. It implies, and chiefly intends, the exerciſe of faith in a dying hour. There is reaſon to conclude, that every chriſtian is more or leſs in the actual exerciſe of this divine grace at the time of his departure. Sometimes the ſaint is taken out of life on a very ſhort warning; a few days or hours of natural ſickneſs and pain, terminates in a diſſolution, yea, in ſome inſtances, the believer is changed in a moment, and ſuddenly paſſes to glory; theſe quick removes leave ſcarce

* Water baptiſm is certainly, and it may be principally, intended in the paſſage; yet I apprehend it includes the whole of that goſpel obedience required in them that believe, of which baptiſm is the beginning: and thus it agrees with *Matt.* xxviii. 20. And indeed the party baptized, lays himſelf under a moſt ſacred engagement to maintain a regular and perfect profeſſion, and to obſerve all things whatſoever the Lord hath commanded, to the end of his days: which looſe nominal chriſtians do well to conſider.

ſcarce any room for a diſplay of this grace in the ſubject, to thoſe who are about him; and with reſpect to thoſe who more gradually decline, in the ordinary way, like the reſt of mankind, as hinted before, the trial of ſome, in that ſeaſon of nature's diſtreſs, is ſmall in compariſon with others, but for the moſt part, the ſorrows of a dying hour call for ſtrong faith, inſomuch that the ſevereſt exerciſes in life, to which men are liable, are repreſented as unſpeakably leſs, or at leaſt more tollerable, than thoſe which uſually attend a ſeparation from the body, *Jer.* xii. 2. "If thou haſt run with the footmen, and they "have wearied thee, than how canſt thou "contend with horſes? and if in the land of "peace wherein thou truſtedſt, they wearied "thee, then how wilt thou do in the ſwelling "of *Jordan*?" If we are ready to ſink under preſent afflictions, be they greater or leſs, while there is peace in reſpect of bodily health and ſtrength, and can ſcarce keep up our ſpirits and hope, what ſhall we do when the floods of death come upon us, where fears are on high, and nature muſt die? The laſt enemy is a king of terrors, and will certainly prevail, ſo far as to bring the body under its

dominion

dominion for a ſeaſon, and the righteous may have bands in their death, to which many of the wicked are ſtrangers, at which ſome, like *Aſaph*, hath ſtumbled, not conſidering their end, *Pſalm* lxxiii. 3, 4. But at beſt, when all relief or ſupport from creatures, and fleſh and heart fail, and it may be darkneſs, unbelief, and the tempter is around the departing ſpirit, it requires ſtrong faith; indeed the chriſtian is expreſly aſſured, that the Lord will not leave him; he ſhall find in that hour that God is the ſtrength of his heart; but then this ſtrength, like other divine communications while here, even to the laſt, is through faith; for in the preſent ſtate, every bleſſing imparted from the God of all grace, is received, or derived in a way of believing: No living man can tell what it is to die; but it is certain from the analogy of experience in life, that there muſt be a vigorous exertion of faith, to maintain hope in death; however comparatively eaſy the paſſage may be, nothing ſhort of this will enable a dying ſinner to rely on God, and reſign his body to the duſt, in earneſt expectation of being preſent with the Lord, and obtaining a better reſurrection; yet in this hope

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the believer departs, and the manifestation of his faith, is in proportion to the severity of his conflicts, whether natural or spiritual, in this finishing period of his warfare. History is silent about the particular occasion or manner of this faith in *Noah*, *Abraham*, and others mentioned in the context, but it may be useful to note, that to be strong in faith in the encounter with death, is not confined to those who have been eminent for their bravery in life; it is sometimes the case that those who have been weak and timerous, under the various trials they have met with, have been favoured at last with an uncommon fortitude of mind, insomuch that they have been bold, yea, and in a manner triumphant, in the views of eternity: However this is certain, there can be no hope in death, under any circumstances, without an active faith, through which, after patiently enduring, the heirs of salvation inherit the promises; the exercise of this grace is therefore needful to a final victory, and joyful entrance into the kingdom of God. I proceed,

Secondly, To the objects a believer is conversant with, whereby he is sustained and becomes victorious over the enemy. And in general,

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they are the ſame with which he is concerned in the courſe of his life. To die in faith, Beloved, is ſtrictly and properly no other than to finiſh a life of faith: It is the cloſing ſcene in which the chriſtian, as it were, goes over his life again, and confirms it. This is performed under a realizing proſpect of the unſeen world, and the things which are in it; true faith gives a kind of ſubſiſtence of this in the heart, without which, its own exiſtence or operation in the mind of the ſubject is impoſſible: but we are told, ver. 1. of this chapter, that "faith is the ſub-"ſtance of things hoped for, the evidence "of things not ſeen." By the latter it becomes the ground of the former, and thereby a foundation of courage and joy in the hour of death; nevertheleſs a bare, however firm belief of a future ſtate of exiſtence, though needful, is not ſufficient; to die in faith, after the manner of *Abel*, *Noah*, and *Abraham*, is to reſign and depart as heirs of the promiſe, which requires an appropriating view, and full perſuaſion, of enjoying the ſame in a future ſtate of bleſſedneſs. In a word, the dying believer is converſant with the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, his hope, and the bleſſings of grace

and glory treaſured up in him. But not to reſt in generals on ſo intereſting a point, the following particulars will yield a more diſtinct and perfect account of the matter.

1. The believer dies under a practical ſenſe of his redemption by the blood of Chriſt. *Job* himſelf, one of the earlieſt ſaints on ſacred record, and who ſeems to have lived before *Moſes*, or at leaſt to have no immediate concern with his law, yet, being an upright ſervant of God in his day, is an example of this, chap. xix. 25. "I know, ſays he, that "my Redeemer liveth." This is likewiſe confirmed by *David*, *Pſalm* xxxi. 5. "Into "thy hands I commit my ſpirit; thou haſt "*redeemed* me, O Lord God of truth." A paſſage which I am perſuaded anſwers to the heart of a dying chriſtian; this article aſcertained by effectual calling * fortifies the ſubject in the floods of great waters, and inſpires

* This agrees with that animating paſſage, *Iſa.* xlii. 1, 2. "Fear not, for I have *redeemed* thee, I have called "thee by thy name, thou art mine; when thou paſſeſt "through the waters I will be with thee, and through the "rivers, they ſhall not overflow thee." The ſame idea is conveyed, *Pſalm* xxxii. 1, 2, compared with ver. 6. By which it appears that redemption and pardon, its bleſſed fruit, is a ground of hope and confidence in the deepeſt diſtreſs, and particularly in the ſorrows of death.

ſpires him with courage. Thus, he that dies in faith, dies looking to Jeſus who ſuffered on the croſs; he views his Saviour, who loved him and gave himſelf for him, and is converſant with his deliverance from wrath to come, by his ſufferings and death. This price of the ſoul, the compleatneſs of his Redeemer's atonement, manifeſted in his reſurrection from the dead, is held in contemplation, and poſſeſſes him with an holy confidence, as juſtified freely by grace, and entitled to glory. Hence he hath boldneſs in death, and in the proſpect of judgment to come: "The ſting of death is ſin, and the "ſtrength of ſin is the law;" but, ſays the believer, Chriſt hath redeemed me from the curſe of the law; therefore death and the devil are diſarmed and naked; they ſhall not be able to hurt me; thanks be to God there is no condemnation to them that are in Jeſus; he is my hiding-place and my ſhield, and will compaſs me about with ſongs of deliverance. This is the firſt, and a principal thing by which faith becomes effectual to the victory of its ſubject in death, namely, his eternal redemption by the blood of his Saviour: without an appropriating view of this, no

ſenſible ſinner can face or vanquiſh the enemy. But there are other animating conſiderations which follow. As,

2. His intereſt in the covenant of grace. Thus *David*, 2 *Sam.* xxiii. 5. Theſe were the laſt words of that ſweet pſalmiſt of *Iſrael*, when the Spirit of the Lord was upon him, and his word was on his tougue: "He hath "made with me an everlaſting covenant, "ordered in all things and ſure." Jeſus is the ſurety of this covenant, and they who are redeemed by his blood are certainly intereſted therein, as are all true believers, whoſe ſins are forgiven. The old covenant, being broken, can afford no relief; it curſes, and therefore kills the hope of its tranſgreſſor; and it is rare that a ſinner is without a painful conviction of guilt when his diſſolution is nigh; but this new covenant of grace is a covenant of life to the believer, ratified in the death of his ſubſtitute, the ſurety and prince of that covenant; this fills him with courage and joy. It is an eternal covenant, ſettled in the immutable counſel of God, the fruit of everlaſting love, and eſtabliſhed in a divine and unchangeable head. Again,

3. With

2. With this ſtand connected the promiſes. After the account in the text, of theſe worthies, it follows; "Not having received "the promiſes, but having ſeen them afar off, "and were perſuaded of them, and embraced "them." The promiſes referred to, are thoſe relating to the coming of the Meſſiah, which belonged to old-teſtament ſaints, being no other than a repeated confirmation of the firſt and great promiſe, *Gen.* iii. 15. So then theſe all died in faith, *i. e.* believing the promiſes in expectation of Chriſt, by whom they ſhould obtain the reward of the inheritance, as the context ſhews; in like manner now the Son of God is come, the faithful die as they live, *i. e.* in a contemplation on the exceeding great and precious promiſes they have received, which are all Yea and Amen in Chriſt Jeſus; theſe they have embraced, and from theſe they derive conſolation and courage when departing this life. Thanks be to God, the dying beds of our fellow chriſtians are a confirmation of this: How do they, as it were, run after this and the other promiſe, and cry out for faith to lay hold of and apply it, or, believing, rejoice in the word of the

Lord,

Lord, and ſtrengthen their hearts in the hour of trial! And further,

4. Another thing which imploys the faith of the chriſtian, when dying, is his approaching inheritance, in the fruition of which the ſubſtance of the promiſe is received, chap. x. 36. This is his conſolation, that when abſent from the body, he is preſent with the Lord; in the proſpect of this far better ſtate, he is not only *willing* to die, but can even *long* to depart. An inſtance of which we had in our late dear ſiſter, whoſe deceaſe is the immediate occaſion of the preſent diſcourſe, it was in a manner her habitual ſupport, inſomuch, that had I not on a late mournful providence in a meaſure anticipated the ſubject, I ſhould have thought it ſeaſonable, it being that which ſo greatly animated our friend in the lateſt moments of her life, or rather in the article of death. This inheritance at large, comprehends the redemption of the body from the grave. Thus the martyr's had in view a better reſurrection, ver. 35. And this ſtands ſupported under the chriſtian diſpenſation by the reſurrection of Jeſus, and is accompanied with a perſuaſion of his all-prevailing interceſſion and ſecond appearance:

So

So then, dying in faith, takes in a proſpect of the heavenly country, or that city which hath foundations, even the reſt which remaineth for the people of God. Moreover,

5. The victory of faith in a dying hour, proceeds from the ability and grace of the Redeemer, whom the chriſtian has truſted. Thus *Paul*, when in expectation of departing, 2 *Tim.* i. 12. "Nevertheleſs, ſays he, I am "not aſhamed for I know whom I have "truſted, and I am perſuaded that he is able to "keep that which I have committed unto him "againſt that day." Two things the believer is converſant with, on which his fortitude and triumph depends in this warfare, the truth of his faith, or that he hath really truſted in Chriſt, of which the apoſtle had no doubt, and the faithfulneſs, power and love of Jeſus in whom he confided, a point in which he is no leſs ſatisfied; and indeed it is eaſier to apprehend the excellency of Chriſt who is the object of faith, and the ſecurity of thoſe who truſt him, than it is to know that we believe on his name; happy the man who is perſuaded of both, he is prepared to meet the laſt enemy, and defy all his terrors. The man that dies in an appropriating view of his

redemption

redemption by Christ, and his interest in the everlasting covenant of grace, that can claim in the promises, and look forward with a believing prospect of entring into life, and being ransomed from the grave; he whose conscience doth witness to his trust in the Lord, who is able to save him, and consequently hath a certain expectation of the inheritance of the saints; I say, this man must needs die in spiritual peace, however nature may be distressed in the valley of death; he must be courageous, safe and honourable in his end, in a word, he cannot fail of success; his hope shall not make him ashamed, for the love of God is shed abroad in his heart by the spirit, who dwells in him an earnest of glory. It remains,

Thirdly, To mention some articles of importance, which stand confirmed by a manifestation of the christian's faith in the season of death. these are principally four.

1. His own real character. This is clear from what has already been proved. We have seen that no faith is genuine, but that which abides. The scriptures abundantly prove this, among the rest, *Hab.* ii. 4. is a capital witness: "The just, says the prophet, "shall

"shall live by faith;" *i. e.* to the end, for it immediately follows, "If any man draw "back, his soul is not upright within him." He then that continues is faithful; a good man and true. A deceiver is for the most part offended when trouble overtakes him, either by perſecution for the word, or other afflictions in providence, he doth not ſerve God for nought, and when his hedge is removed, his religion is gone, he hath no longer any motive in himſelf to a ſhew of godlineſs; this, I ſay, is generally the caſe; nevertheleſs there are ſome exceptions; things may poſſibly concur, to induce a formal profeſſor to keep up the name, at leaſt for a while, even under ſufferings in life; but to hold faſt *in death*, in a reliance on the promiſe of God in Chriſt Jeſus, is an infallible mark of ſincerity. If there be any reaſoning in *Job* xiii. 15, 16. He that will truſt in the Redeemer, though he ſlay him, whatever he may be in other reſpects, cannot be an hypocrite. But,

2. It illuſtrates the virtue of that faith which belongs to the chriſtian. How noble and powerful the principle, which ſhields the heart, and ſuſtains the hope of a dying ſinner!

victorious grace that can triumph over death and the grave! It may well be ſtiled precious; a choice gift of God that ſaves the ſubject, and gives heaven the glory. The excellency of this divine grace is not to be expreſſed; by it the ſaints overcome the world, and ſatan, in their paſſage to glory. Again,

3. When a ſinner dies in faith, it manifeſts the power and truth of the Redeemer. Faith glorifies its object, more eſpecially in the article of death. If *Abraham* being ſtrong in faith, gave glory to God in waiting for the promiſe of *Iſaac*, when his body was comparatively dead, much more did he, and all his deceaſed ſpiritual ſeed, magnify the Lord in believing the promiſe of their own future glory, when fleſh and heart failed them. But the chriſtian when he holds faſt his confidence in a dying hour, and departs in faith, illuſtrates the virtue of Chriſt in the power of his grace, and in his fidelity to the promiſes. The faith of the choſen is of the operation of God, not only in reſpect of exiſtence as a principle in the heart, but the exertion of this grace, however properly the believer's own act, depends on a communication from Jeſus, the vital root of holineſs

holineſs. If without, or ſeparate from Chriſt, as he himſelf declares, *John* xv. 5. his real diſciples can do nothing in life, can they die in faith without ſupply from him? But if it is in the ſtrength of Jeſus, that the chriſtian finiſhes his warfare, and maintaining his hope in death, enters triumphant into glory, does not this throw a luſtre on the power and grace of him who ſuſtains him? This evidently ſhews that the Lord is with him, ſtands by him, and is the ſtrength of his heart, according to his word. Then the promiſes are manifeſtly Yea and Amen, in Chriſt Jeſus, and among the reſt, that which in a manner comprehends them all, in point of aſſiſtance, and which by the way, was a ſtrong conſolation to our ſiſter lately deceaſed, *Heb.* xiii. 5. "I will not leave thee, nor "forſake thee." And ſtill further,

4. It proves that the Lord hath delight in the ſubject, and confirms his character as an object of his love. In ver. 38 of the preceding chapter, we have this awful ſentence from the mouth of the Lord, "But "if any man draw back, my ſoul ſhall have "no pleaſure in him." He therefore delights in the man that perſeveres to the end, which

agrees with *Pſalm* cxlvii. 11. "The Lord "hath pleaſure in them that fear him, in "them that hope in his mercy." But he hath pleaſure in none but thoſe whom he loves, and if quickening grace unto a life of faith manifeſts the great love of God to the ſubject, *Eph.* ii. 4. much more muſt an overcoming faith in a dying hour prove him foreknown of the Almighty. And finally,

5. It follows, for our comfort, that they inherit the promiſes. This is undeniable if that word be true, 1 *Pet.* i. 9. "Receiving "the end of your faith, even the ſalvation of "your ſouls." Thus it evidently confirms the undoubted happineſs of the dead who die in the Lord, nor can it with reaſon be ſuppoſed that the upright ſoul, who, being ſupported by the Lord in his conflicts with death, maintain his hope unto the end; in whom the power and faithfulneſs of the Redeemer has been diſplayed in this manner, and who is evidently an object of the Father's unchanging affection, ſhould periſh, or come ſhort of the kingdom of God.

So then to die in faith is peculiar to the ſaints; a noble and crowning attainment; it ſuppoſes a principle of grace, and an open

teſtimony

teſtimony for the Lord, and devotion to him, in the order of that diſpenſation the ſubject is under; and conſiſts more directly in the actual exertion of faith or truſt in God, when his departure is at hand, in which he is converſant with his redemption, his intereſt in the covenant of grace, the promiſes he has embraced, his approaching inheritance, and the power and love of the Lord, in whom he confides; and it further appears, that in ſo dying, the real character of the ſubject, the virtue of his faith, the all-ſufficiency and faithfulneſs of Chriſt; and in a word, the certain preſent and eternal happineſs of the deceaſed in a future ſtate are manifeſt, to the glory of God and the everlaſting conſolation of his people. Glorious dying indeed! Bleſſed are they who thus accompliſh their warfare. O that Chriſt and his grace may be thus magnified in us when we die!

You ſee then, Beloved, what finiſhes the character of mortal man, and compleats his memorial in the teſtimony of God; not *life altogether*, however pious and good; his *manner of dying* is the criterion; and the true chriſtian's character at death, lies not in the great eſtates or honours he was poſſeſſed of when

when he departed, but in his dying in faith; this proves him an heaven-born ſoul, and an heir of grace and ſalvation. How then, my dear Friend, wilt thou die? Wouldſt thou die the death of the righteous? Take heed that thou liveſt his life. It appears from what has been ſaid, and thy own reaſon will tell thee, that there can be no proſpect of an unbeliever's dying in faith; art thou then in Chriſt Jeſus? Haſt thou fled to him as a periſhing ſinner? and is thine habitual reliance on him alone, as thy Saviour? Where are thy works? Haſt thou embraced the promiſes? and art thou purifying thyſelf in expectation of the bleſſed hope they afford? What evidence haſt thou of thy faith in the Son of God? Or is there any hope for the man who dies in his ſins? *Theſe all died in faith*, and thereby obtained the inheritance of the ſaints; they all witneſs againſt the unbelieving ſinner, and proclaim him a child of wrath, and ruined for ever, unleſs he repents.

But I hope the generality preſent, are not altogether unacquainted with a life of faith on the Redeemer: Happy they who are in Chriſt, who walk not after the fleſh but after the Spirit; their record is on high, and

nothing

nothing ſhall be able to ſeparate them from the favour of God! Rejoice, O chriſtian, even though in the midſt of tribulation; he that purged thy ſins is thine advocate with the Father; he has prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not; therefore be of good cheer, it will certainly abide and prevail in the hour of trial; fear not the king of terrors; only live by faith, and die daily, the victory is ſure, and in the end thou ſhalt triumph.

It is a convincing teſtimony to the truth, and ſhould comfort our hearts, that in ſo many inſtances, when the time is come that we muſt part with our lovely companions in the Lord, we behold them in the exerciſe of a lively hope of glory to come. I bleſs God for repeated experience of this in one and another, among whom may be ranked our late dear brother, with his relict now in like manner taken away from us; however different their circumſtance in other reſpects, it may with ſincerity and ſoberneſs be reported of them, as of the worthies referred to in the text. *They all died in faith*; to the end they held faſt their confidence in the promiſes, and declared their ſatisfaction in him whom they truſted, and their earneſt expectation of life everlaſting.

everlasting. It is very edifying, Sirs, to visit such dying beds, and if any are backward to this branch of practical religion, they know not what they lose by omitting an indispensible duty of love to their fellow saints, and do well to alter their conduct.

As to our last deceased sister, some notice is taken of her in a *sermon on the departure of her husband, which she wished to hear from the press, but was herself removed before it could be finished; that discourse might in some measure serve as a memorial of both these exemplary christians, yet it may be decent useful to observe, that there was a remarkable affinity in these kindred souls in several respects; she, like him, was early acquainted with the things of the Spirit of God, and, trusting in Christ, devoted herself to his service, with us, in his house; in which she behaved as he did, a constant affectionate member of this body near fifty years; it was likewise her joy to unite with the generous partner of her life in every token of love to the saints, in whom she had peculiar

* A sermon occasioned by the decease of Mr. *Thomas Cox*; whom she survived no more than four weeks and two days.

peculiar delight; ſhe alſo moſt highly eſteemed her place in the church, and with her dying breath expreſſed a ſweet remembrance of him *, long ſince deceaſed, who had been the guide of her youth in the ways of the Lord. Theſe are precious in *Zion*, even as the gold of *Ophir*, but alas they periſh from us! A complication of diſeaſes ſeized our dear Friend, when arrived to the age of ſeventy, under which months of vanity and wearifome nights were her lot, but not without grace to ſuſtain, through the tedious valley of darkneſs and natural ſorrow †, and eſpecially during her widowhood ſtate, which

* My dear honoured father, the Rev. Mr. *Edward Wallin*, who died *June* 12, 1733; paſtor of the ſame church near thirty years, and in the early days of their profeſſion, who are lately departed.

† Some have obſerved that ſhe did not expreſs that concern at the loſs of her excellent companion, as might have been expected; perhaps this was in a meaſure owing to the force of thoſe violent diſorders which laid her in an habit of doſing; but I apprehend the chief or ſole cauſe of this ſeeming indifference, was an inſtant and earneſt expectation of her own change, to which thoſe about her were witneſs: A ſoul fixed in the views of eternity, is not eaſily affected with any thing that paſſes in time, however, the tender *regard* ſhe had for a moſt affectionate and obliging huſband, was evident in the courſe of a long life, and alſo conſpicuous in death, particularly in the ſolemn parting, noticed in the ſermon occaſioned by his deceaſe.

laſted but few weeks, ſhe was indulged with a fortitude of mind, like a chriſtian indeed, in the views of eternity; being fully ſatisfied in her ſtate, ſhe reflected ſtrongly on her effectual calling by grace, and her faith in the Redeemer, and being perſuaded of his infinite merit and love, her ſoul was animated with an earneſt expectation, and almoſt continual deſire of a releaſe, that ſhe might enter his preſence whom ſhe loved, and to whom ſhe had committed the keeping of herſelf till his appearance and kingdom; at length ſhe obtained what ſhe longed for, and we truſt is now in the fruition of her hope.

Thus, my dear Friends, a precious and honourable family is ceaſed from among us! Child and parents, daughter, huſband and wife, are now vaniſhed from us! The order of their departure is a diſplay of the divine ſovereignity; let us ſubmit and adore: The Lord's will be done. Bleſſed be his name, that ſeeing it was his pleaſure to remove them, he was gracious in affording us ſo conſiderable evidence of their dying in faith, and conſequently of their ſeparate ſpirits being now mingled with the general aſſembly and church of the firſt born, whoſe names are

written

written in heaven. O that their death may quicken us in a life of faith, that we in like manner may hold faſt our confidence, and die in the Lord! May you, my dear Friends of this Church, be ſuitably affected with theſe ſtripping diſpenſations! It is true, moſt of theſe ſtrokes might be expected in the courſe of nature; many of our departed friends, like the two laſt, were full of days, and ripe in their ſeaſon for being gathered home; nevertheleſs, theſe ſtrokes repeated in ſo quick a ſucceſſion, and ſo directed as to deprive us, beſides ſeveral other choice fellow ſaints, of an whole family in the neareſt connexion, and ſo juſtly dear to us, within the ſmall ſpace of about two years, loudly call for your earneſt and ſerious attention; it becomes us to mourn, and each one to examine and exert himſelf; when many fall aſleep there is a cauſe, and it is high time to awake: If then you have any regard for the welfare of *Zion*, or can grieve for the affliction of *Joſeph*; if you have any deſire of fulfilling my joy, or to finiſh your courſe with honour and triumph, permit me to beſeech you, as theſe active and uſeful members go off the ſtage, to advance and follow them as they followed

Chriſt

Chriſt in their day; you ſee the night cometh in which no man can work: Come up to our aſſemblies, ſtated and occaſional, as they did, and ſet your ſhoulders to the work of the Lord, each one in his ſtation and capacity, endeavour to make up theſe breaches: This is what the Lord requires at your hands, and your labour ſhall not be in vain. Unhappy ſymptom it will be, if the voice of this providence is not heard, but I am perſuaded better things of you; may the Lord ſucceed this attempt and pour out his Spirit upon us, that we may be wiſe to improve his viſitation into an argument for zeal in his ways, that an harveſt of joy may be reaped from his preſence and bleſſing among us! *Amen.*

FINIS.

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